



## Growing mystery of suspected energy attacks draws U.S. concern

By N. MERCHANT, ROBERT BURNS and ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is facing new pressure to resolve a mystery that has vexed its predecessors: Is an adversary using a microwave or radio wave weapon to attack the brains of U.S. diplomats, spies and military personnel? The number of reported cases of possible attack is sharply growing and lawmakers from both

been behind any attacks, if the symptoms could have been caused inadvertently by surveillance equipment — or if the incidents were actually attacks. Whatever an official review concludes could have enormous consequences. Confirmation that a U.S. adversary has been conducting damaging attacks against U.S. personnel would unleash calls for a forceful response by the United States.

For now, the administration is providing assurances that it takes the matter seriously, is investigating aggressively and will make sure those affected have good medi-

cal care.



## HAVANA SYNDROME

In this Oct. 3, 2017, file photo, tourists ride classic convertible cars on the Malecon beside the United States Embassy in Havana, Cuba.

Associated Press

in Cuba. At least 130 cases across the government are now under investigation, up from several dozen last year, according to a U.S. defense official who was

not authorized to discuss details publicly. The National Security Council is leading the investigation.

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## Growing mystery of suspected energy attacks draws U.S. concern

Continued from Front

People who are believed to have been affected have reported headaches, dizziness and symptoms consistent with concussions, with some requiring months of medical treatment. Some have reported hearing a loud noise before the sudden onset of symptoms.

Particularly alarming are revelations of at least two possible incidents in the Washington area, including one case near the White House in November in which an official reported dizziness.

The new higher number of possible cases was first reported by The New York Times. CNN first reported the case near the White House and an additional incident in November.

Advocates for those affected accuse the U.S. government of long failing to take the problem seriously or provide the necessary medical care and benefits.

"The government has a much better understanding of it than it has let on," said Mark Zaid, a Washington lawyer who represents several people affected. Zaid has obtained National Security Agency documents noting it has information dating to the late 1990s about an unidentified "hostile country" possibly having a microwave weapon "to weaken, intimidate, or kill an enemy over time."

Chris Miller, the acting defense secretary during the last months of the Trump administration, created a Pentagon team to investigate the suspected attacks. That was after he met a soldier late last year

who described how, while serving in a country Miller wouldn't identify, he had heard a "shrieking" sound and then had a splitting

this year. He has met with those reporting injuries as have other top CIA officials. The agency has worked to reduce the wait time for its

nations, and systemic disorganization" in responding to the Havana cases. The report says the cause of the injuries was "currently

"It's very difficult, if not impossible, to fake or misrepresent certain findings to objective clinical evaluations," Giordano said. "I mean, there are certain things you can't make your nerves do or not do."

Other scientists remain skeptical. Dr. Robert Baloh of the University of California, Los Angeles, argued that scans of healthy people's brains sometimes display mini-strokes and that any possible weapon would be too large or require too much power to be deployed without detection.

Baloh said the growing number of cases considered directed energy attacks is actually linked to "mass psychogenic illness," in which people learning of others with symptoms begin to feel sick themselves.

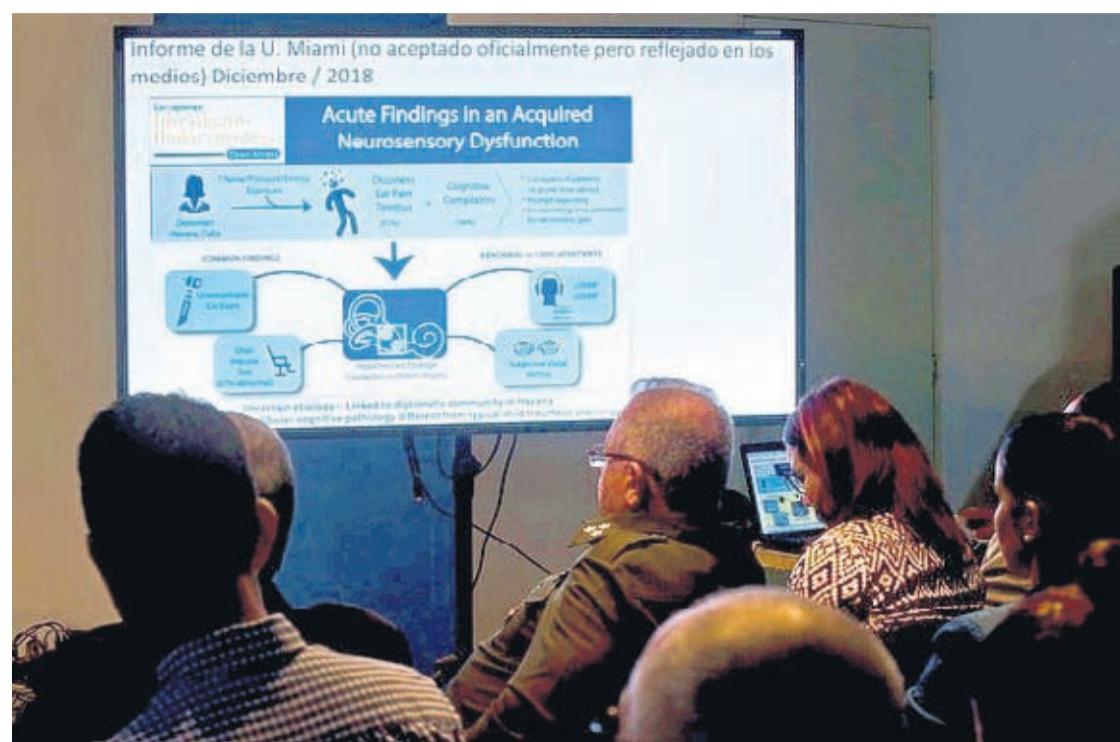
"Many people are hearing about it and that's how it gets propagated," Baloh said.

Lawmakers from both parties are pushing the Biden administration to take this seriously. A bill introduced in both the House and Senate on Wednesday would bolster the payment of disability benefits for traumatic brain injuries suffered in the incidents.

"There's no greater priority than ensuring the health and safety of our people, and the anomalous health incidents that have afflicted our personnel around the world are of grave concern," said Rep. Adam Schiff, the California Democrat who chairs the House Intelligence Committee, in a statement. Rep. Devin Nunes, the committee's top Republican, said the people reporting symptoms "were apparently subject to attack."

Polymeropoulos, the former CIA officer, said he believed the U.S. would ultimately identify what was behind the incidents and who is responsible.

"The actual intelligence is going to take us to the truth on this," he said. "If we find that a certain adversary did this, there's going to be uncomfortable decisions on what to do." □



In this March 14, 2019, file photo, Cuban officials make a presentation on a series of mysterious illnesses suffered by U.S. and Canadian diplomats in Havana, reiterating that no evidence supports allegations that the symptoms resulted from high-tech attacks, during a news conference in Havana, Cuba.

Associated Press

headache.

"He was well-trained, extremely well-trained, and he'd been in combat before," Miller told The Associated Press. "This is an American, a member of the Department of Defense. At that point, you can't ignore that."

Defense and intelligence officials have publicly promised to push for answers and better care for people with symptoms. Lt. Col. Thomas Campbell, a Defense Department spokesman, said the causes of any incidents "are areas of active inquiry." Officials have not identified a suspected country, though some people affected suspect Russian involvement.

CIA Director William Burns testified before Congress that he would make the investigation "a very high priority to ensure that my colleagues get the care that they deserve and that we get to the bottom of what caused these incidents and who was responsible." Burns receives daily updates on the investigation, which covers employees who have reported cases

employees to receive outpatient treatment at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

The CIA also replaced its chief medical officer with a doctor seen internally as more sympathetic to possible cases.

"We were treated so awfully in the past," said Marc Polymeropoulos, a 26-year CIA veteran who was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury following a 2017 visit to Russia. "Now they're putting people in place who not only believe us but are going to advocate for our health care."

One key analysis identified "directed, pulsed radio frequency energy" as the most plausible culprit. Published in December by the National Academy of Sciences, the report said a radio frequency attack could alter brain function without causing "gross structural damage." But the panel could not make a definitive finding on how U.S. personnel may have been hit.

And a declassified 2018 State Department report cited "a lack of senior leadership, ineffective commu-

niques, and systemic disorganization" in responding to the Havana cases. The report says the cause of the injuries was "currently

unknown." The document was published by George Washington University's National Security Archive.

The report also noted that the CIA ultimately closed its Havana station, a victory for a potential adversary.

Dr. James Giordano, a neurology professor at Georgetown University, consulted with the State Department on the Havana cases and has been briefed on more recent incidents in the U.S. and abroad. In reviewing records of people affected in Havana, Giordano noted evidence of neurological injuries in several people, suggesting they may have been hit with radio waves.

He identified two possible culprits: a device intentionally used to target potential victims or a tool that used directed energy waves to conduct surveillance that may have unintentionally harmed the people targeted. One of the November attacks outside the White House had "substantial similarities" to the Havana cases, Giordano said, adding that he was not authorized by the government to be more specific.

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## U.S. commander says more work needed to counter small drones

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

**BAGHDAD (AP)** — A month after an explosives-laden drone targeted U.S. forces at an Iraq base, the top American commander for the Middle East says finding better ways to counter such attacks is a top priority, and the United States is still behind the curve on solutions.

Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie told reporters traveling with him that the use of small drones by Iranian-backed militia is only going to grow in the next few years. He spent the day in Iraq on Thursday, but for security reasons, media accompanying him were not allowed to report on his visit until after he left the region. The drones, which are cheap and easy to buy, are often difficult to detect and problematic to defeat. McKenzie said the U.S. must find more ways to counter their use by America's enemies in the Middle East and elsewhere.

"We're working very hard to find technical fixes that would allow us to be more effective against drones," McKenzie said. Efforts are underway, he said, to look for ways to cut command and control links between a drone and its operator, improve radar sensors to



In this Thursday, May 20, 2021, photo Marine Gen. Frank McKenzie, the top U.S. commander for the Middle East, arrives in Baghdad.

Associated Press

quickly identify the threat as it approaches, and find effective electronic and kinetic ways to bring them down. He added that fencing and high netting can also be used as protective measures.

"We're open to all kinds of things" he said. "The Army is working it very hard. Still, I don't think we're where we want to be."

In mid-April, an drone targeted U.S.-led coalition

forces near a northern Iraq airport, causing a large fire and damage to a building. There were no casualties. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. The U.S. has blamed Iran-backed militia groups for previous attacks, most of them rockets that have targeted the American presence in Baghdad, the capital, and military bases across Iraq. Overall attacks against coalition troops

have been frequent since a U.S.-directed drone strike killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani near the Baghdad airport last year. Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis was also killed in the attack. The strike drew the ire of mostly Shiite Iraqi lawmakers and prompted parliament to pass a non-binding resolution to pressure the Iraqi government to oust foreign troops from the country.

The Biden administration has resumed strategic talks with Baghdad, initiated under President Donald Trump, in which the future of U.S. troop presence in Iraq is a central point of discussion. McKenzie and others have expressed optimism that the U.S. will maintain a military presence in the country.

The militia groups, McKenzie said, are frustrated because there had been some hope that U.S. forces would leave Iraq, particularly in the wake of the Soleimani strike.

"They believe they can carry out attacks at a fairly low level that won't provoke a response, yet will create enough friction that will eventually induce us to leave," McKenzie told reporters traveling with him.

"I think it's a dangerous situation." He said he believes the U.S.-led coalition still has work to do in Iraq to help defeat the Islamic State group, which maintains some presence in western and northern Iraq. But he said the Iraqi security forces have done a good job battling IS.

After spending Thursday in Iraq, McKenzie was in Syria on Friday, meeting with U.S. and partner commanders and forces at four different bases. □

## U.S. again extending temporary protected status for Haitians

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Biden administration is allowing eligible Haitian nationals residing in the U.S. to apply for a new 18-month designation for temporary protected status, reversing a Trump administration effort that had sought to end the special consideration. In a statement Saturday, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas cited security concerns, social unrest, an increase in human rights abuses, crippling poverty and other problems in Haiti for the decision.

DHS says a foreign country may be designated for temporary protected status, or TPS, because of conditions that temporarily

prevent the country's nationals from returning safely or because the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately. While a person with TPS cannot be removed from the U.S., DHS notes that it is a temporary benefit that doesn't lead to lawful permanent resident status or give any other immigration status. DHS initially designated Haiti for TPS in January 2010 in the aftermath of the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that devastated the country. The designation was extended several times until the Trump administration announced in January 2018 that Haiti's TPS designation would end effective July 22, 2019. Sev-

eral lawsuits challenging the termination have allowed the designation to remain in effect.

"Today, the Biden administration affirmed America's commitment to its humanitarian values," Murad Awawdeh, executive director for the New York Immigration Coalition, said in a statement. "Haitian New Yorkers can now rest easier knowing that their families can stay together and in their communities as a vital part of our economic and social fabric."

The NYIC, an umbrella group for policy and advocacy organizations in the state, estimates that 5,200 Haitian recipients of TPS reside in New York. Saturday's



In this Thursday, May 13, 2021 file photo, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testifies before a Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee hearing on Capitol Hill, in Washington.

Associated Press

renewal of TPS affects more than the 50,000 Haitians living in the U.S. while redesignating TPS for Haitians who

arrived in the U.S. after 2010 could benefit up to 100,000 more, according to the NYIC. □

# Charleston church shooter making appellate arguments

By MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

**COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)** — The man on federal death row for the racist slayings of nine members of a Black South Carolina congregation is making his appellate argument that his conviction and death sentence should be overturned.

Oral arguments in the case of Dylann Roof are scheduled to be held Tuesday before a three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, based in Richmond, Virginia. Appellate Judge Jay Richardson, who as an assistant U.S. Attorney prosecuted Roof's case, is not part of the panel.

In 2017, Roof became the first person in the U.S. sentenced to death for a federal hate crime. Authorities have said Roof opened fire during the closing prayer of a 2015 Bible study session at Charleston's Mother Emanuel AME Church, raining down dozens of bullets on those assembled. Roof was 21 years old at the time.

In a lengthy brief, Roof's attorneys argue that an appellate court should vacate Roof's convictions and death sentence, or remand his case to court for a "proper competency evaluation."

"The federal trial that resulted in his death-sentence departed so far from the standard required when the government seeks the ultimate price that it cannot be affirmed," they



In this April 10, 2017, file photo, Dylann Roof enters the courtroom at the Charleston County Judicial Center in Charleston, S.C.

Associated Press

wrote, arguing that their client's mental illness should have prevented him from serving as his own attorney during a portion of the trial, and also being sent to federal death row.

U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel held two competency hearings for Roof: one before the start of his trial, and one before its sentencing phase, to determine if Roof could act as his own attorney for that portion of the trial.

His appellate team wrote that the court errantly found Roof competent,

despite the fact that "every defense expert agreed Roof suffered a delusional belief he would be rescued by the victors of a race-war, which prevented him from understanding the threat of execution was real."

Representing himself for sentencing, Roof successfully prevented jurors from hearing mitigating evidence about his mental health, "under the delusion," his attorneys wrote, that "he would be rescued from prison by white-nationalists — but only, bizarrely, if he kept his men-

tal-impairments out of the public record."

In that part of the trial, the self-avowed white supremacist neither fought for his life nor explained his actions, saying only that "anyone who hates anything in their mind has a good reason for it."

This, his attorneys wrote, resulted in "a complete breakdown" of any possible defense, with jurors being "left in the dark" about any details from Roof's past that could have possibly been used to mitigate the government's "inflamma-

tory case for death."

Following his federal trial, Roof was given nine consecutive life sentences after pleading guilty in 2017 to state murder charges, leaving him to await execution in a federal prison and sparing his victims and their families the burden of a second trial.

After that sentencing, Solicitor Scarlett Wilson — who had also been pursuing the death penalty — called the deal "an insurance policy for the federal conviction," ensuring that Roof would spend the rest of his life in prison, should the federal sentence not stand.

Wilson also said that she felt more confident a federal death sentence would be carried out under the newly minted Trump administration than it would have been under a Democratic one.

At the time, there was anticipation that then-President Donald Trump might swiftly resume federal executions, following cessation of the practice under several previous administrations.

Trump's decision to reinstate federal executions didn't come until 2020, however, when his Justice Department ended a 17-year hiatus, going on to oversee a total of 13 federal executions.

Due to his remaining appeals, Roof's case was not eligible for execution at that time. □

## 2 dead, 12 injured in shooting at New Jersey house party



Investigators work the scene of a shooting in Fairfield Township, N.J., Sunday, May 23, 2021.

Associated Press

**FAIRFIELD TOWNSHIP, N.J. (AP)** — A family house par-

ty in South Jersey turned into a crime scene where at least two people were

fatally shot and 12 others were wounded, state police said.

Authorities arrived at the house in Fairfield Township, about an hour outside of Philadelphia, late Saturday night. A resident who runs a local anti-violence organization said he was called out to assist families at the 90s-themed party. John Fuqua, of Life Worth Living, said guests who attended the party were of all ages. New Jersey State police said a 30-year-old man and 25-year-old-woman were fatally shot. There were 12

other people who were injured and transported to local hospitals. Photos show overturned pop-up party tents, tables and chairs, and debris throughout the home's yard. A long driveway was still filled with cars late Sunday morning.

Two cousins who live in the area of the shooting said they heard music from the party until after midnight, then a series of shots — at least 15 of them over a few minutes.

Joeron Pierce and James Pierce, who live in homes next to each other, said

that there was chaos after that. Partygoers ran through their yards and asked to come into their houses. They said cars ran into one other trying to speed away.

Fairfield Township Mayor Benjamin Byrd Sr., who was at the scene Sunday, said that New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy offered his support and help.

"Nobody knows when someone's going to come out of the woods with a gun," Byrd said. He did not have any details about the shooting. □

# Iran official says nuke inspector deal expired; talks go on

By NASSER KARIMI and JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's hard-line parliament speaker said Sunday a temporary deal between Tehran and international inspectors to preserve surveillance images taken at nuclear sites had ended, escalating tensions amid diplomatic efforts to save the Islamic Republic's atomic accord with world powers. As fellow hard-liners demanded Iran delete the images, officials delayed an earlier-planned news conference by the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. That signaled negotiations between the United Nations agency and Tehran will continue through Sunday night.

The last-minute discussions further underscored the narrowing window for the U.S. and others to reach terms with Iran. The Islamic Republic is already enriching and stockpiling uranium at levels far beyond those allowed by its 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran's hard-line parliament in December approved a bill that would suspend part of U.N. inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories did not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions by February. The IAEA struck a three-month deal with Iran in February to have it hold the surveillance images, with Tehran threatening to delete them afterward if no deal had been reached.

That three-month deadline expired Friday under the Gregorian calendar. Under the Persian calendar, however, the three-month deadline comes on Monday.

On Sunday morning during a session of parliament, speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf announced the deal had expired. He said Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all matters of state, supported the decision to see the deal as void.

"After these three months, the International Atomic



In this May 28, 2020, file photo, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, center, is surrounded by a group of lawmakers after being elected as speaker of the parliament, in Tehran, Iran.

Associated Press

Energy Agency definitely won't have the right to access the camera footage or transfer them," he said. Qalibaf, a member of Iran's top Supreme National Security Council, previously preempted another nuclear program announcement in April as well.

Hours later, however, a website called Nournews that's believed to be close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council quoted an anonymous official suggesting Tehran's deal with

the IAEA could be extended "another month."

The nuclear negotiations have been plagued by contradictory, anonymously leaked information coming from Iran. It's likely a sign of the conflict between the administration of the outgoing President Hassan Rouhani, the relatively moderate cleric who clinched the 2015 deal, and the hard-liners now seeking to replace him.

In Vienna, the IAEA had said its Director-General

Rafael Mariano Grossi would brief journalists Sunday afternoon on Iran. The agency said Sunday night that the briefing would be delayed as consultations between the IAEA and Iran continued.

It wasn't immediately clear if the images from February until Saturday had been deleted. Before Qalibaf's remarks, lawmaker Ali Reza Salimi urged an open session of parliament to ensure Iran's civilian nuclear arm "erased" the images.

The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, the country's civilian atomic agency, did not immediately comment on the decision.

"Order the head of the Atomic Energy Organization to avoid delay," said Salimi, a cleric from Iran's central city of Delijan. The "recorded images in the cameras should be eliminated." Under a confidential agreement called an "Additional Protocol" with Iran, the IAEA "collects and analyzes hundreds of thousands of images captured daily by its sophisticated surveillance cameras," the agency said in 2017.

It also wasn't clear what this meant for in-person inspections by the IAEA. There are 18 nuclear facilities and nine other locations in Iran under IAEA safeguards.

In 2018, then-President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. unilaterally out of the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. An escalating series of incidents since Trump's withdrawal has threatened the wider Middle East.

Over a year ago, a U.S. drone strike killed a top Iranian general, causing Tehran to later launch ballistic missiles that wounded dozens of American troops in Iraq. □

## Gaza fishermen take to water again after cease-fire

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) —

The frenzied shouts of an auctioneer at Gaza City's main fishing port brought a welcome reprieve from the din of gunfire and explosions as life begins slowly returning to normal following 11 days of hostilities between Hamas and Israel.

Israeli security forces prevented fishermen from sailing during the conflict, but they began allowing a limited number of ships to set out beginning Saturday as Egyptian mediators worked to firm up a cease-fire that took effect Friday.

Gazans take pride in their seafood, and the return of fishing buoyed hopes that

the cease-fire will hold.

After a night out on the water, fishermen unloaded their bounty of crabs, shrimp and other fish at first light Sunday at Gaza City's al-Mina port, where Hamas police were present to maintain order.

Buyers were already waiting to make their bids on boxes of fish arrayed on the ground after being unloaded from the boats, where young boys working as deckhands assisted older men in sorting and washing their catch.

The fish were then loaded onto horse-drawn carts for delivery to local markets. Meanwhile Sunday, hundreds of municipal workers and volunteers be-



Fisherman load a horse-drawn cart before delivering their haul to market after a limited number of boats were allowed to return to the sea following a cease-fire reached after an 11-day war between Hamas and Israel, in Gaza City, Sunday, May 23, 2021.

Associated Press

gan clearing rubble from Gaza's streets. The work began outside a high-rise building that was flattened by Israeli warplanes

during the early days of airstrikes on Gaza, with workers loading rubble into donkey carts and small pickup trucks. □

## 21 die in extreme weather in China ultramarathon

**BEIJING (AP)**—Twenty-one people running a mountain ultramarathon have died in northwestern China after hail, freezing rain and gale-force winds hit the high-altitude race, state media reported Sunday.

After an all-night rescue operation in freezing temperatures involving more than 700 personnel, rescuers were able to confirm that 151 people were safe, out of a total of 172 participants. Twenty-one had died, according to the official Xinhua News Agency, which said the runners suffered from physical discomfort and the sudden drop in temperature.

The runners were racing on an extremely narrow mountain path at an altitude reaching 2,000-3,000 meters (6,500-9,800 feet). The 100-kilometer (60-mile) race was held Saturday in the Yellow River Stone Forest tourist site in Baiyin city in Gansu province.

Participants were not rookies. One of the deceased was a well-known runner Liang Jing, who had won a 100-kilometer (62-mile) race in Ningbo, reported the Paper, a state-backed newspaper based in Shanghai.

A woman who worked for the race organizer, Gansu Shengjing Sports Culture Development Co., said



**In this photo provided by China's Xinhua News Agency, rescuers walk into the accident site to search for survivors in Jingtai County of Baiyin City, northwest China's Gansu Province, Sunday, May 23, 2021.**

there were no predictions of extreme weather for the day of the race, according to Beijing News, a paper owned by the Beijing city government.

However, Baiyin city's local branch of the National Early Warning Information Center had warned for the past three days of hail and strong winds.

The race also followed a relatively established course, having been held four times, according to an account posted online by a participant in the race

who quit and managed to make his way to safety. But the weather caught them off guard, and on the morning of the race Saturday, he already sensed things were not normal. The runners were not dressed for winter-like conditions, many wearing short-sleeved tops.

"I ran 2 kilometers before the starting gun fired to warm up ... but the troublesome thing was, after running these 2 kilometers, my body still had not heated up," the competitor said in

a first-person account that has been viewed more than 100,000 times on his WeChat account "Wandering about the South." He later told the Paper that the forecast the day prior to the race did not predict the extreme weather they encountered.

The most difficult section, from kilometer 24 (mile 15) to kilometer 36 (mile 22), climbed 1,000 meters (3,280 feet). There, he said the path was just a mix of stones and sand, and his fingers grew numb from the

**Associated Press**

cold.

When he finally decided to turn back, he already felt dazed. He said he was able to make it to safety and met a rescue crew. He did not respond to a request for comment left on his social media account.

Some runners farther along the course had fallen off the trail into deep mountain crevices, according to a reporter for state broadcaster CCTV. It was not clear how many of them survived.

Video footage showed rescuers in winter jackets in the pitch-dark night searching with flashlights along steep hills and narrow paths. Search operations ended by noon Sunday, rescuers told Xinhua.

Online, some wondered what, if any preparations organizers had made in the event of an emergency. The race organizer did not immediately respond to calls seeking comment Sunday.

Baiyin city Mayor Zhang Xuchen held a news conference later Sunday and profoundly apologized as the organizer of the event. The government promised a full investigation.

"We express deep condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims and the injured," the mayor said. □

## Italian cable car plunges to the ground, killing at least 13



**Rescuers work by the wreckage of a cable car after it collapsed near the summit of the Stresa-Mottarone line in the Piedmont region, northern Italy, Sunday, May 23, 2022.**

**Associated Press**

**NICOLE WINFIELD**  
**Associated Press**

**ROME (AP)**—A cable car taking visitors to a moun-

tain top view of some of northern Italy's most picturesque lakes plummeted to the ground Sunday and

then tumbled down the slope, killing 13 people and sending two children to the hospital in serious condition, authorities said.

Stresa Mayor Marcella Severino said it appeared that a cable broke, sending the car careening until it hit a pylon and then fell to the ground. At that point, the car overturned "two or three times before hitting some trees," she said. Some of those who died were thrown from the cabin.

The Italian government announced a commission to investigate the disaster, which is likely to renew questions about the quality of Italy's transport infrastructure.

Images from the site showed the crumpled car in a clearing of a thick patch of pine trees near the summit of the Mottarone peak overlooking Lake Maggiore. The car was believed to have fallen around 15 meters (yards), according to Italian media. "It was a terrible, terrible scene," Severino told Italy's SkyTG24.

The plunge on the Stresa-Mottarone line happened about 100 meters (yards) before the final pylon, said Walter Milan, spokesman for Italy's Alpine rescue service. There was initially confusion about the number of injured, but the rescue ser-

vice tweeted the "definitive toll" stood at 13 dead and two injured.

Milan noted that the cable line had been renovated in 2016 and had only recently reopened after coronavirus lockdowns in Italy curtailed travel and forced the suspension of many leisure activities. Milan suggested many families may have flocked to the mountain on a sunny Sunday after months of restrictions.

The line is popular with tourists and locals alike to scale Mottarone, which reaches a height of 1,491 meters (4,900 feet) and overlooks several picturesque lakes and the surrounding Alps of Italy's Piedmont region. □

## Zimbabwe's tobacco booms, but Black growers complain of debt

By FARAI MUTSAKA

Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP)

— Zimbabwe's tobacco is flourishing again. And so are the auctions where premium prices are being paid for the "golden leaf" that is exported around the world.

Most of the growers are Black, a historic change from when tobacco was largely produced by white farmers. But many of the small-scale farmers complain they are being impoverished by middlemen merchants who are luring them into a debt trap.

Rosemary Dzodza recently traveled 200 kilometers (125 miles) to the capital, Harare, with her tobacco crop for what she hoped would be a good payday. The 60-year old farmer ended up sleeping in the open for two weeks awaiting payment. When the money eventually came, it was just a tiny fraction of what her tobacco had actually fetched at the auction.

"My tobacco sold for \$7,000, but I am only going home with less than \$400," she said, trembling with anger. The rest of the money went to the merchant who had given her a loan to pay for fertilizer, seed, labor, firewood for curing, and even household food items under a contract growing scheme.

In addition to repaying the loan with interest, Dzodza was obligated to sell her crop to the merchant, at the price he set. The merchant then sold the tobacco to the highest bidders at the auction or to wealthier merchants, mostly buyers who will export the crop to China.

For more than 60 years, tobacco was a lucrative export crop from which white farmers profited. But after the year 2000 when Robert Mugabe's supporters began seizing white-owned farms, often violently, tobacco production plummeted. The flue-cured tobacco crop dropped from a 1998 peak of 260 million kilograms to just 50 million kilograms in 2008.



A tobacco grower waits patiently for her tobacco crop to be sold at the auction floor in Harare, Thursday, April 8, 2021.

Associated Press

Since then tobacco production by Black farmers has grown.

A few thousand white farmers produced the bulk of the tobacco crop before the land reform but now the number of Black growers, mainly small-scale, has risen to more than 145,000. The recovery has been stunning in recent years with Zimbabwe's tobacco crop estimated to be 200 million kilograms this year, up from 180 million kilograms in last year.

Zimbabwe's commercial banks used to give loans to white farmers so they could purchase inputs for their crops. But the banks pulled out years ago because the government has not issued transferable ownership deeds to the Black farmers resettled on the formerly white-owned land.

The contract growing scheme helped Black farmers desperate to get in on the tobacco bonanza. It was initiated mainly by Chinese buyers but is now so lucrative that it attracts dozens of Zimbabwean merchants.

According to the regulatory body, the Tobacco Mar-

keting Industry Board, 96% of tobacco farmers have been financed under the contract growing scheme. The contract system is hailed for reviving tobacco and cementing Zimbabwe as Africa's biggest grower of the crop. But many Black farmers say greedy merchants are impoverishing farmers.

Farmers are charged high interest on their loans and many fall prey to predatory contractors, said Tobacco Association of Zimbabwe president George Seremwe.

"It's a loss-making venture. The farmer is always in debt because as soon as they repay the loan, they have to take out another one. Year in and year out they are in debt," he said.

Some lose livestock — their only wealth — to merchants after failing to repay the loans due to poor harvests, while "unethical" merchants are also "a menace," said Seremwe.

The Tobacco Industry Marketing Board this year released 20,000 farmers from contracts with merchants who tried to cheat them by bloating the value of inputs

supplied.

More than 90% of tobacco farmers want out of contract growing, but cannot find alternative funding, according to a study published last year by Tobacco Control, a journal on tobacco research.

Close to 60% of farmers said they were in debt, according to the research.

"There is no evidence to suggest that tobacco growing, in its current state, has benefitted the (Black) tobacco farmers. Tobacco farmers are largely victims, rather than beneficiaries of the sector," the report said. "The model is now expensive and needs to be reviewed,"

Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor John Mangudya told state media in April after complaints by farmers.

At the heart of the problem is the inability of resettled farmers to raise their own finance through banks, said economist and analyst John Robertson.

"Banks fear that they will be left holding a piece of paper if a farmer fails to repay. They can't touch the land," said Robertson.

The government says the solution lies with the state-owned Land Bank launched in April, which would loan farmers money for their tobacco crops at reasonable rates. Some are skeptical, but farmers such as Dzodza can only pray for its success.

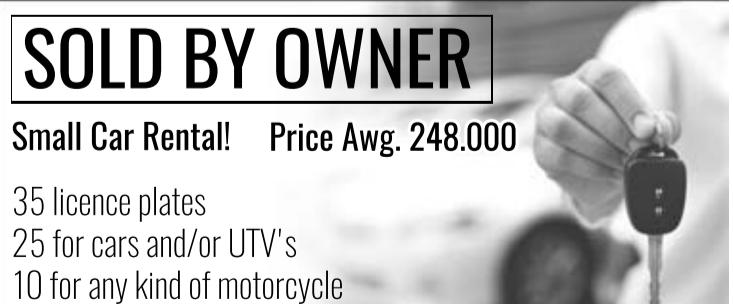
"Otherwise I will have to remain in contract farming," she said. "It's like we are chained." □

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## MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Center Visit our newest Location on Palm Beach!

**PALM BEACH** — MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Center just opened a third walk-in location on Palm Beach at Budget Car Rental next to Soprano's Piano Bar. The other two locations are at the Cove Mall and near the Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort at the Mill.

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MedCare Clinic, a high-quality medical clinic that is specialized in urgent care for tourists and that has been appointed as the national COVID-19 clinic for tourists, and Laboratorio di Servicio, a full-service modern medical laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment, have partnered up to provide fast and reliable COVID-19 testing to all. Laboratorio di Servicio is ISO-15189:2012 accredited by the Dutch Council for Accreditation (M317).

### Rapid PCR

As Aruba resumes to receive more and more visitors each month, one thing has become very clear: testing is critical. Thus far MedCare Clinic has been offering high-volume laboratory testing with results in 24 hours or less. The newest service on the market is Rapid PCR, where you receive your results in minutes not hours.

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The Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Centers are located at the Cove Mall, near the Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort at the Mill, and now also



at Budget car rental next to Soprano's Piano Bar. These three locations are a stone's throw from your resort, condominium, or other vacation accommodation. Walk-ins are welcome. It is recommended that the tests are done timely, as the negative test is only accepted if taken up to three days before boarding your flight. MedCare Fit2Fly Testing Center at the Cove Mall is opposite the Holiday Inn and is open every day for walk-ins from 8 AM through 10 PM. MedCare's other location is situated at The Courtyard Aruba Resort, is across the street from the RIU Hotel and is open every day from 8:30 AM until 2 PM. The Newest location at Budget Car Rental next to Soprano's Piano Bar is open daily from 5 PM to 9 PM.

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new rapid PCR will be \$150 (results in 30 minutes.) MedCare offers the easier and substantially cheaper Antigen Test that is acceptable for travel to the U.S. as per the CDC guidelines. Pre-travel testing is not covered by the Aruban visitor insurance. Please contact your insurance company to verify if testing costs are insured. Results are e-mailed to you within 24 hours of testing.

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## Henry Bengis celebrating his 100+ in Aruba

**EAGLE BEACH**—When Henry is in the office of General Manager Luigi Heredia, he entertains his audience, Luigi and the executive assistant at Costa Linda Beach Resort. The man is a character. He's been coming to Aruba since the 80's, never missed a year, including 2020. He intends to spend the next few weeks under a beach palapa, he says, among his Aruban friends, at his home away from home.

The way he tells it, his keen-eyed late wife, she died of cancer a few years ago, noticed construction going on, beachside, to the right of the Divi property, where she was vacationing with Henry.

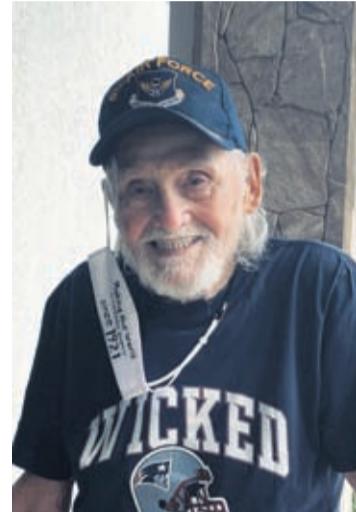
She dragged him in, they signed the dotted line and have enjoyed the resort together, for many years. Henry now travels with his daughter – she is a great cook, he adds.

Henry's mask says it all: Making the world a better place since 1921.

Yes, he was born in 1921, which makes him a centenarian. His cap, 8th Air Force, also tells a story, and so does his tee-shirt praising Wicked Winnahs. Henry is obviously a New England Patriot fan.

What's with the cap, I asked.

Unexpectedly Henry gave us all a lesson in history. As a pilot in the US Air Force combat units of World War

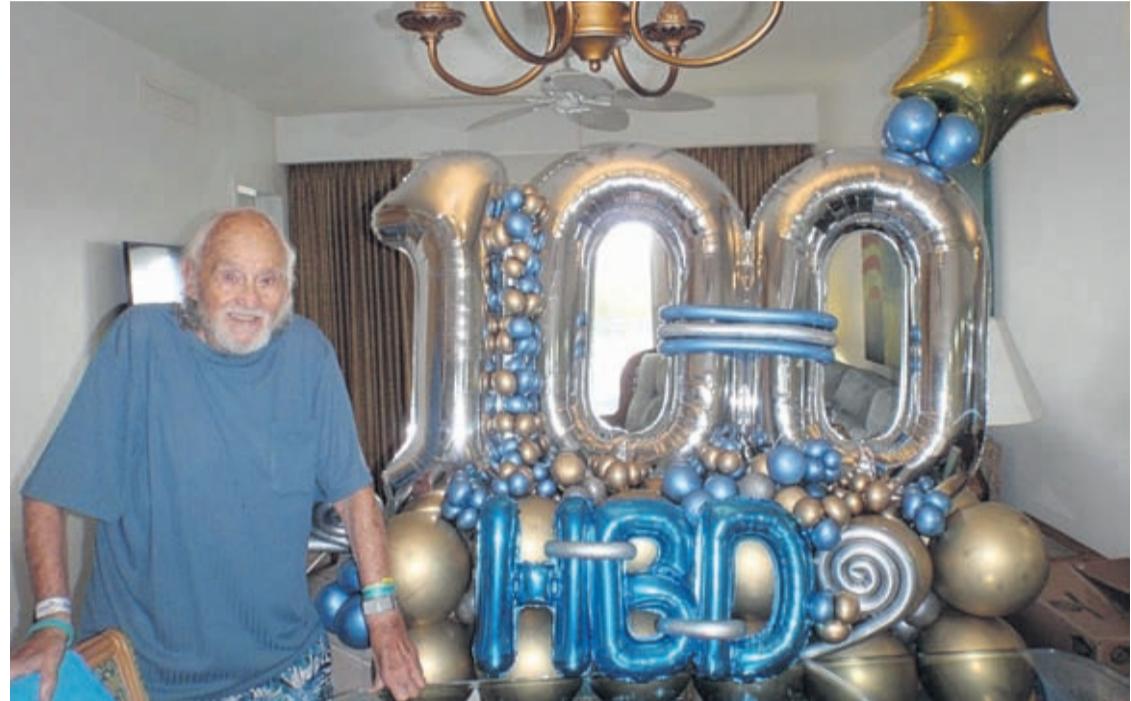


II, Henry moved to London in 1942 and participated in over 20 strategic bombing missions over Germany. On his 21st mission, in September 1944, his plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire, and he performed a perfect landing in the countryside, in Belgium, where he was taken prisoner with his crew, transported by train and later on foot, to a prisoners' camp in Northern Germany. He was 23. They were not all bad Germans, says Henry, who reports he was treated fairly by his captors, who were interested in Hollywood Western movies. Then around April 1945, the guards just left, abandoning their post, signaling the end of the war.

Henry returned home to a fruitful life, raising a family, watching football, traveling, mostly to Aruba.

"I have to thank the VA, the Veteran Administration", he says, in charge of lifelong healthcare services to eligible military veterans like Henry. "I am all spare parts, he banters, from tip to toe, they have operated, repaired and replaced, almost every bone and system in my body, they treat me like a celebrity, and are proud I'm still around, in need of their services."

We understand they have 1,700 VA medical centers and outpatient clinics



throughout the country, and Henry claims to be their best client.

So here you have it: The

secret to vibrant, eternal youth is a healthy sense of humor – Henry told us he was a retired pole dancer, when we first introduced

ourselves, also fantastic national health care.□

Source: Aruba Timeshare Association



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## Aruba in the top 10 Vaxication" Destinations



ORANJESTAD – According to the portal Kayak, Aruba ranked in the top 10 "Vaxication Destinations" for US travelers. The number 1 destination is San Jose Costa Rica and at number 10 Cairo Egypt.

Travel is back on but with restrictions. As we slowly ease back into tourist mode, we're closely tuning into where we can and can't go and the local rules of all possible destinations, which may be different from the U.S. To help narrow down our search, Kayak has rounded up the most-searched cities that are now open to vaccinated U.S. citizens. If you decide to hop a plane this summer, check them out but don't forget to pack your vax card and plenty of masks to keep everyone safe.

This is certainly a positive news for our tourism. Aruba has a total of 60.000 persons vaccinated of which 40.000 received their 2nd vaccine already. The purpose of this top 10 list is to help US travelers choose a destination which has all its protocols in place and is safe to travel to and spent their vacation on without any worries.

For more information go to <https://www.brit.co/lifestyle/travel/vacation-ideas-during-covid>. □

## Aruba is preparing to welcome Cruise Tourism

ORANJESTAD - Aruba is preparing to receive its first cruise ship in the month of June. It must be emphasized that the reintegration of cruise tourism will be a slow and gradual process. This has been said various times before and will continue to be the case for this year, according to Ronella Croes, CEO of the Aruba Tourism Authority.

The situation will likely normalize around the year 2022 and onward. All rules, protocols recent developments must be taken into account,

such as the CDC's most recent guidelines in America, where all-out ships originate from and all conditions must be in place with regards to the current situation.

It is something that Aruba is preparing itself for, however, we are prepared for this process to go slower than the other aspects of tourism, such as those who come via airplane. Besides the trajectory to fight the virus, which has been ongoing for quite some time, the trajectory in recovering our economy has also been receiving more attention. □

## Successful meeting of the National Action Plan Committee and Animal Care Foundations

ORANJESTAD — The National Action Plan Committee met with animal care foundations and other private entities dealing with the stray dog issue in Aruba. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the Dog Control Center (CCC) and the Dog Control Unit (DCU). Mrs. Irene Croes, veterinarian and chairman of the action committee gave a presentation of the National Plan.

The National Plan consists of three phases and the Dog Control Unit (DCU) has completed the direct action phase. Both the DCU and the CCC are part of the Platform Dog Ordinance (PLdC). First a location had to be created for the dogs to be placed in custody as indicated in the PLdC, which serves to keep the dogs off the street. According to the PLdC, the use of dog catchers as an

aid to help reduce stray dogs is required. So far, some elements in the first phase of the PLdC include, for example, the mandatory registration of all dogs, the establishment of rules for breeders and a proposal to make dog sterilization mandatory.

While sterilization of all pets is a great incentive, it has failed in the past due to lack of implementation. At the end of 2017, no funds were available for the implementation of mass sterilization. In 2019, an advisory committee, and later an action committee, filed a petition for large foundations receiving international funding to take care of this. During the meeting they petitioned to find donations for "Fundacion Stimami, Sterilisami" so that they can continue with their program. The chairman of the Stimami Sterilisami

Foundation indicated that he needed approximately 1 million florins to sterilize pets. The government has no money for this in the current situation. The limited resources available for the implementation of the National Plan are used to deal with irresponsible owners. Since August 2019 they have started educational programs in schools about the dog law. They also have a Facebook page "Stima Mi Mascota" to raise awareness and educate the community on this topic. The old policy of not giving unwanted pets even an hour to be rescued remains in the past. Now the strays are being held for days as per the dog law, waiting to find a new owner, with the help of promotion on their social media page Stima Mi Mascota. In addition, the CCC guides the owners in handing over their pets at the location. It is impor-

tant to establish very good communication and cooperation between all entities, foundations and government departments in order to implement this law successfully. According to the PLdC, all dogs must be kept on their owner's property. Many foundations have already helped sterilize stray dogs and are willing to assist with the early stages of the DCU, but only if the dogs are not dangerous or a threat to their neighborhood. Only with the consent of the entire neighborhood can neutered dogs remain in the area, but with a visible tag to avoid being taken by the DCU. It must be clear to all foundations that unwanted dogs in the neighborhood can turn to the residents for assistance at the DCU. The foundation, which is responsible for placing these dogs in the neighborhoods, will ideally have the opportunity

to find a permanent new home for these dogs. The DCU is here to enforce the law. People are being fined and the police have been asked to publish the penalties for non-compliance. Authorities hope that dog owners will take better care of their dogs. The dog law serves not only to keep dogs on the owner's property, but also to provide appropriate care for all dogs, as animal abuse and neglect is not permitted by law.

The capacity at the CCC is limited. Based on the government's current financial situation, they urge the community to do its part, sterilize their pets, keep them on their property and be patient. The DCU has started and is addressing this issue step by step due to the nature of the issue. The goal is to help motivate the community to become responsible pet owners. □

# High inflation? A generation of investors has never felt it

By STAN CHOE  
AP Business Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The central question gripping Wall Street is whether the burst of inflation hitting the economy as it recovers from the pandemic is just temporary or the start of a real problem. The answer threatens to crack the stock market's incredible, record-setting run that began in March 2020.

Adding to the fog of the debate — and the uncertainty that has markets churning — is that more than a generation has passed on Wall Street since investors had any experience at all with high, long-lasting inflation.

What's clear is that the average cost of regular gasoline has jumped to \$3.04 per gallon from \$1.89 a year earlier. Used cars and trucks cost 21% more last month than a year before. Airline fares ascended nearly 10%.

Many economists, as well as the Federal Reserve, say not to worry about any of this. They're convinced these fast price gains will prove fleeting. If the experts are wrong, however — remember last month's jobs data, where economists' predictions were wildly off the mark? — it could ravage the economy and force the Fed to reverse its record-low interest rate policy and trim the bond purchases that are boosting markets.

That possibility has led to some jagged moves in the stock market. The S&P 500 slumped 2.1% in one day last week after a report showed the Consumer Price Index rose at the fastest pace since 2008 in the year through May.

The difficulty is that the last time very high, long-lasting inflation was a serious threat for the economy was before many of today's professional money managers were born. To have had experience in such a market, they need to remember the 1970s and early 1980s, when inflation remained stubbornly above 10%.

"Certainly, having gone through that, it's helpful,"



In this Tuesday, March 17, 2020, file photo, a trader works the floor at the New York Stock Exchange, in New York.

Associated Press

said Rich Weiss, a 61-year-old senior portfolio manager at American Century Investments. He started in the industry in 1984, when inflation was finally on the decline, but he remembers how painful the earlier years had been while he was in graduate school.

"Anybody, if they want, can go back to the numbers and see what happens when inflation becomes ingrained, embedded in the fabric of the economy and the markets," he said. "But it's different if you live through it."

The numbers show that the high-inflation era was painfully bumpy for stocks, giving some credence to the worries that are shaking Wall Street now. The S&P 500 tumbled 29.7% in 1974 as inflation shot up to 12.1%. But big gains were interspersed through the period as well, such as a 31.5% surge in 1975.

Brian Jacobsen, a senior investment strategist at Wells Fargo Asset Management, was born a year after that, in 1976.

Most of Jacobsen's working life has been in an era of ever-moderating inflation and interest rates. He

doesn't know what it was like to live through the trauma of price controls or having to pay a mortgage with a 10% interest rate. But he spent much of his time studying it while earning his doctorate degree in economics.

"Fortunately, experience can be transmitted through generations of investors," he said.

Like American Century's Weiss, Jacobsen believes this rise in inflation will be only "transitory," which is the word Fed officials have used to describe it.

He also talks regularly with colleagues, both retired and still-working, who lived through the last inflation era. Their message to him so far?

"They told me this is nothing," Jacobsen said. "Mainly because they lived through it before, and they're like, '4.2% inflation? Put a 1 in front of that number and then maybe I'll worry. Don't wake me until it's 14.2%.'"

Regular investors logging into trading apps on their phones, though, don't get to lean on institutional knowledge like that. And experts say they are mak-

ing up a bigger proportion of trading volume, as waves of new investors jump into the stock market for the first time. That could be adding to the market's overall unease and volatility.

By some measures, retail investors made up more than a third of all U.S. trading volume for stocks in the early part of this year, up from a quarter in the years before the pandemic.

One difficulty for all investors, big and small, is that there is no clear playbook for navigating high inflation.

Gold is often pitched as protection against inflation, but the biggest ETF holding the metal is down 1.8% for 2021, as of Wednesday. Bitcoin has also been recommended for protection against inflation, but its price fell sharply on the day of the inflation report last week and then tumbled further on Wednesday.

Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities are bonds whose payouts rise and fall with inflation, but many are offering negative yields.

Stocks are supposed to be some of the better performers during inflationary

periods, but returns there can be volatile too, as evidenced by the 1970s and early 80s.

At Columbia Threadneedle Investments, few fund managers are looking to the historical record to gauge whether long-lasting inflation should be a big worry now, "as we've never reopened an economy after a global pandemic," spokeswoman Liz Kennedy said.

"Many said they needed more data over a longer time period as the economy reopens to really get a sense for how this plays out," she said.

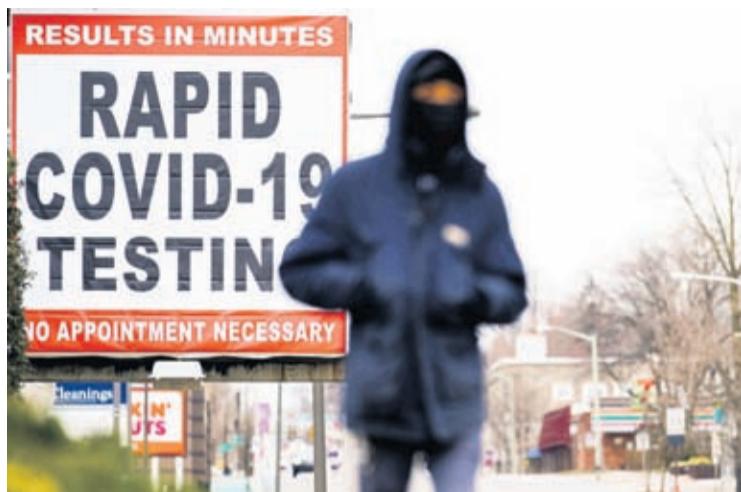
If that's the case, be prepared to experience even more swings in the stock market as Wall Street's biggest question waits even longer to be answered. □

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## COVID testing's value shrinks as vaccines beat back virus



In this Jan. 25, 2021, file photo, a person wearing face mask as a precaution against the coronavirus walks near a sign advertising a rapid COVID-19 testing site in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

By MATTHEW PERRONE

AP Health Writer

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Federal health officials' new, more relaxed recommendations on masks have all but eclipsed another major change in guidance from the government: Fully vaccinated Americans can largely skip getting tested for the coronavirus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said last week that most people who have received the full course of shots and have no COVID-19 symptoms don't need to be screened for the virus, even if exposed to someone infected.

The change represents a new phase in the epidemic after nearly a year in which testing was the primary weapon against the virus. Vaccines are now central to the response and have driven down hospitalizations and deaths dramatically.

Experts say the CDC guidance reflects a new reality in which nearly half of Americans have received at least one shot and close to 40% are fully vaccinated.

"At this point we really should be asking ourselves whether the benefits of testing outweigh the costs — which are lots of disruptions, lots of confusion and very little clinical or public health benefit," said Dr. A. David Paltiel of Yale's School of Public Health, who championed widespread testing at colleges last year.

While vaccinated people can still catch the virus, they face little risk of serious illness from it. And positive test results can lead to what many experts now say are unnecessary worry and interruptions at work, home and school, such as quarantines and shutdowns.

Other health specialists say the CDC's abrupt changes on the need for masks and testing have sent the message that COVID-19 is no longer a major threat, even as the U.S. reports daily case counts of nearly 30,000.

"The average Joe Public is interpreting what the CDC is saying as 'This is done. It's over,'" said Dr. Michael Mina of Harvard University, a leading advocate of widespread, rapid testing. With more than 60% of

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Americans not fully vaccinated, he thinks screening of those without symptoms still has a role, particularly among front-line workers who have to deal with the public. CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said the updated guidelines are based on studies showing the robust effectiveness of the vaccine in preventing disease in various age groups and settings. Even when vaccinated people do contract COVID-19, their infections tend to be milder, shorter and less likely to spread to others.

As a result, the CDC says vaccinated people can generally be excluded from routine workplace screening for COVID-19. That change could eliminate testing headaches like the one recently reported by the New York Yankees, when one player and several staffers tested positive on a highly sensitive COVID-19 test, despite being vaccinated.

Baseball officials are discussing whether to drop or reduce testing of people who have no symptoms. But widespread attempts to waive testing for vaccinated people could face the same dilemma seen with the CDC's new guidelines on masks: There's no easy way to determine who has been vaccinated and who hasn't.

Employers can legally require vaccinations for most

workers, though few have tested that power, since the vaccines don't yet have full regulatory approval. Even asking employees to disclose their vaccination status is viewed as intrusive by many employment-law specialists. □

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## Networks rely on reboots, franchises amid streaming's rise

By DAVID BAUDER and LYNN ELBER

Associated Press

Everything old is new again on network television, and without apology.

As the TV industry rushes into the future with streaming services, traditional broadcasters unveiled 2021-22 schedules that rely heavily on familiar series brands and reboots of decades-old shows.

There's even a two-fer based on "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," the Las Vegas-set forensics drama that dazzled viewers when it arrived in 2000. Get ready for "CSI: Vegas," a CBS remake complete with original stars William Petersen and Jorja Fox and, in a sign of diversity progress, Black actor Paula Newsome as the lead investigator.

The annual network tradition of wooing potential ad buyers with lavish New York City presentations of upcoming shows and their stars was reduced by COVID to a virtual presentation for the second year.

But a deeper disruption came with the announcement that Discovery and WarnerMedia plan to merge, adding yet another media behemoth with streaming services — Discovery+ and HBO Max — to the fray that began with Netflix.

The broadcast networks aren't merely on the sidelines. Most are aligned with streaming services through their corporate owners, such as Disney's ABC and Disney+, which means they're both competing and cooperating.

The strategy to double-down on standard network fare comes as lavish streamed shows including "The Crown" draw critical acclaim, Emmy Awards and subscribers. But it's ad dollars that the networks need, and they're uniquely positioned to provide the mass audiences that justify them.

Here are the key takeaways from this week's announcements by ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC.

**ROUGH WATERS**



This image released by CBS shows William Petersen reprising his role as Gil Grissom in a scene from the new "CSI: Vegas," the sequel to the Network's global hit "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation." (Sonja Flemming/CBS via AP)

Associated Press

Tuning in to some of the broadcast network's online presentations felt like watching a phone company show off its new collection of landlines. With rotary dialers!

It's interesting. Maybe even helpful. But it doesn't reflect the world of today, or tomorrow. Streaming undeniably draws the buzz now — the hot programs that get critical attention or awards, and the format is what business leaders concentrate on.

During the 1995-96 television season, 56% of people watching television in the evening were seeing the live output of network affiliates — primarily CBS, NBC, ABC and Fox. This year, that was down to 26%, according to the Nielsen company.

The always caustic Jimmy Kimmel referred to ABC as "Disney minus." He torpedoed the network's show "Big Sky" as "the #1 new drama that no one has ever heard of or seen."

The unveiling of a new fall schedule at CBS — for two decades generally America's most-watched television network — used to be the week's centerpiece. This year it was rushed through, almost an afterthought. Instead, CBS and its Viacom corporate part-

ners emphasized all of the content available on multiple platforms.

"We talk about literally looking at our company holistically, and where these shows end up, where they seem to fit best," said CBS entertainment chief Kelly Kahl in an interview. "That's the goal of what we're trying to do. We're trying to get the best shows in front of viewers, however they decide to watch."

Fox Entertainment CEO Charlie Collier sounded almost plaintive in talking to advertisers about his network's shows: "These are not built for subscribers, they're built for you, to help your brand."

That's as close as you'll get a television executive to saying they're making material to be played in between commercials.

It's a business. And while executives may be on their heels, advertisers committed to some \$18.6 billion in spending for commercials last year on broadcast and cable networks after hearing their plans, even with uncertainty caused by the pandemic, according to Media Dynamics, Inc. Ad spending hasn't dropped the way viewership has,

since the programming is still among the few opportunities to reach a large au-

dience.

So while the rise of streaming makes this feel like a business in transition, it's not entirely clear what lies ahead.

### WANT FRIES WITH THAT?

The term "franchise" applies to the fast-food industry and to TV, with some networks making the adaptable series formats it describes as a central part of their schedules.

A key producer is Dick Wolf, whose series will fill nine prime-time hours on two networks this fall: The new "Law & Order: For the Defense" is joining long-running "Law & Order: SVU" and recently introduced "Law & Order: Organized Crime" on NBC, which already airs Wolf's three "Chicago"-set dramas, and CBS is adding "FBI: International" to make it a trio of his "FBI" shows.

CBS is expanding its "NCIS" family (from another producer) with a Hawaii-set newcomer added to the franchise that includes the original series starring Mark Harmon and "NCIS: Los Angeles."

"If you look at what is working these days on broadcast television, it's impossible to escape that franchises help you on several levels," said CBS executive Kahl. A brand name helps

launch a series and viewers like to watch franchise shows — and thus the commercials — as they air, he said, adding, "our bread and butter is still selling ad time."

The shows also do surprisingly well on streaming. There are 350-plus episodes of durable "NCIS" on Netflix, and the show had the second-most minutes streamed in the last week of April against such buzz-worthy competition as "The Falcon and the Winter Soldier."

### MORE DIVERSITY

The network plans reflected notable efforts at promoting diversity and social activism, in the year following the murder of George Floyd and the widespread demonstrations afterward.

Fox will televise "Our Kind of People," a series about upper-middle-class Black professionals who vacation on Martha's Vineyard. CBS will premiere "The Activist," a reality show about people looking to bring change in the areas of health, education and the environment.

ABC is remaking its old series, "The Wonder Years," but this time with a Black cast. It will air a limited series on the life of Mamie Till-Mobley, whose son Emmett Till was lynched in 1955 and became a civil rights icon.

Its new series "Queen" features singers Eve and Brandy in a story about a 1990s hip-hop act getting back together.

ABC's parent Disney Corp. is starting the Onyx Collective, an effort at promoting the work of diverse creators. And the NatGeo network made note that it was donating to a group that promotes Black scientists studying sharks.

"We believe people want to watch shows that give voice and value to those who've been left out or gone unheard," Fox's Collier said at a news conference.

Unsurprisingly, Kimmel had a more acidic take.

"We don't know what to do right now," he said. "We're so desperate, we've had to resort to doing the right thing." □

## Harris scores 37 leads 76ers past Wizards 125-118 in Game 1

By DAN GELSTON

AP Sports Writer

**PHILADELPHIA (AP)** — Tobias Harris showed why Philadelphia might have its own Big 3 worthy of winning a championship.

Harris carried top-seeded Philadelphia's offense when it sagged early and scored 37 points, Joel Embiid had 30 and the 76ers survived the sub-.500 Washington Wizards in a 125-118 Game 1 victory on Sunday. Game 2 is Wednesday in Philadelphia.

Harris scored 28 points in the first half, making a case Philly has — with All-Stars Embiid and Ben Simmons — three big stars that could rival the superstar trio of Kevin Durant-James Harden-Kyrie Irving in Brooklyn. The Sixers needed Harris' outburst to offset an upset-minded Wizards team that was within five points with 45 seconds left. Bradley Beal scored 33 points and Russell Westbrook had 16 — but neither sensational scorer took over in long enough stretches needed for an upset. Westbrook even stepped out of bounds with 37 seconds left, cutting off a potential rally.

Unable to create consistent offense outside of Harris, the Sixers finally put together-

er a 3-point barrage late in the third quarter that had 11,160 fans — roughly half-capacity — sounding as if it was 20,000-plus packing the house.

Harris, of course, hit a tying 3, Seth Curry hit his first, Danny Green buried one and Curry pounded his chest and talked smack after another 3 made it 88-81. The fans erupted soon after in a "Trust the Process" chant with Embiid at the free-throw line, and the Sixers closed the quarter with a 99-93 lead.

The Sixers hung on for their first playoff win in two years, even as Simmons went 0 for 6 from the free-throw line and scored only six points. Embiid was whistled for three fouls and the Sixers missed 14 of 17 3-pointers in the first half, leaving it up to Harris to play up to his \$180 million contract.

Harris spent the season believing he was worthy of an All-Star spot and opened some eyes with 28 points on 12-of-19 shooting in the half. He played the half like he was trying to win a game of HORSE — turnarounds, fallaway jumpers, pull-up jumpers in the paint, and in one instance, he drove the length of the court before he hit a little floater.

Beal, who torched the Six-

ers for 60 points in January, and Westbrook combined for just 20 points in the first half but took a 62-61 lead into the break.

Washington advanced by routing the Indiana Pacers to emerge from the play-in round as the East's No. 8 seed, returning to the playoffs after a two-year absence. The Wizards were a disaster early in the season, dealing with injuries and a COVID-19 outbreak. They started 0-5 and were 17-32 in early April. They made the playoffs at 34-38 and are trying to become the first team with a losing record to win a playoff series since the 1987 Seattle SuperSonics.

Washington's must-win attitude down the stretch spilled into Game 1. The Game 1 trend this weekend had been heavy favorites with time off — such as Brooklyn against Boston — needed time to find their legs before putting the game away. The Wizards played Thursday — while the Sixers had a full week off — and played every minute as a team determined to steal one on the road.

### TIP-INS

**Wizards:** The Wizards went on 10-0 run late in the first quarter with Embiid and

Simmons on the bench. ... Washington and Philadelphia played each other for the first time in the postseason since 1986.



76ers:

Dikembe Mutombo, who helped lead the Sixers to the 2001 NBA Finals, received a rousing ovation when he rang the ceremonial bell to start the game. ... They went 27-5 in the regular season with Simmons, Curry, Green, Harris and Embiid in the starting lineup. ... Harris joined Allen Iverson as the only Sixers with 28-plus points in a half in the playoffs since 1997.

### YOU'RE THE MAN

Coach Doc Rivers went to each Sixer this week and told him how important his contribution this season was to their success. "I thought this year, every guy needed to know what their value was to this team and how important they were, and how important each guy's role was," he said. □

Philadelphia 76ers' Tobias Harris reacts after making a three-pointer during the second half of Game 1 of a first-round NBA basketball playoff series against the Washington Wizards, Sunday, May 23, 2021, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

## Campenaerts gets 1st Grand Tour stage win, Bernal keeps lead

**GORIZIA, Italy (AP)** — Belgian rider Victor Campenaerts won the 15th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Sunday for his first victory in a Grand Tour, and Egan Bernal kept the leader's pink jersey after a day that was marked by a large crash at the beginning of the route.

Campenaerts, who rides for Team Qhubeka Assos, edged out Oscar Riesebeek at the end of the 147-kilometer (91-mile) route from Grado to Gorizia that crossed into Slovenia and covered the fourth-category climb to Gornje Cerovo three times.

"As we don't have climbers for the next few stages in the mountains, we decided to go all in today,"



Belgian cyclist Victor Campenaerts, right, followed by Dutch rider Oscar Riesebeek, celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the 15th stage of the Giro d'Italia cycling race, from Grado to Gorizia, northern Italy, Sunday, May 23, 2021.

Associated Press

Campenaerts said. "Now we have three victories in the Giro, which is simply

fantastic ... We're making an important statement as we are racing for the

greater purpose of changing lives with bicycles: to provide bicycles in Africa for better education and better lives."

The duo had attacked from a breakaway approaching the final climb, with the rain falling heavily.

Nikias Arndt won a sprint for third, seven seconds behind Campenaerts.

"I've missed an opportunity, perhaps the opportunity of a lifetime," Riesebeek said. "I just made a mistake, I don't know if I made a mistake or ... of course, he was really strong. It's hard after 15 days to find something good about it. At the minute I am very disappointed."

Bernal crossed the line in

the peloton, more than 17 minutes behind. The 2019 Tour de France champion maintained his lead of 1 minute, 33 seconds over Simon Yates and is 1:51 ahead of third-place Damiano Caruso.

The stage was halted for about half an hour shortly after the start following a mass crash. Several riders had to get medical attention at the side of the road and there were numerous bicycle changes.

Emanuel Buchmann, who had hopes of a podium finish, was one of the riders forced to retire from the race because of his injuries. The German cyclist was sixth overall, 2:36 behind Bernal. □



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## Rays rally past Blue Jays 6-4 for 10th straight win



Toronto Blue Jays' Randal Grichuk celebrates his two-run home run with Teoscar Hernandez during the eighth inning of a baseball game Sunday, May 23, 2021, in Dunedin, Fla.

Associated Press

By The Associated Press

**DUNEDIN, Fla. (AP)** — Austin Meadows, Manuel Margot and Mike Brosseau drew consecutive bases-loaded walks with two outs in the ninth inning and the Tampa Bay Rays rallied for their 10th straight win, beating the Toronto Blue Jays 6-4 on Sunday.

The Rays trailed 4-2 going into the ninth, but took advantage of five walks by relievers Tyler Chatwood (0-1) and Travis Bergen

to send Toronto to its fifth straight loss.

After a leadoff walk and a single, Brett Phillips hit an RBI single with one out that made it 4-3. Chatwood retired Randy Arozarena before walking Yandy Díaz to load the bases.

Bergen entered and Meadows worked a nine-pitch walk after fouling off three 3-2 pitches, tying the score. Margot walked on five pitches to put Tampa Bay ahead and Brosseau

walked on four pitches. Josh Fleming (4-3) got the win, and recently acquired J.P. Feyereisen worked the ninth for his first save.

**YANKEES 5, WHITE SOX 4**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Aaron Judge walked against Liam Hendriks with the bases loaded in the ninth inning, and the Yankees overcame Aroldis Chapman's first blown save on the way to their sixth straight win. Jameson Taillon completed a historic scoreless turn through the New York rotation. But pinch-hitter Andrew Vaughn sprinted around the bases after tying it at 4 with his one-out homer in the ninth.

It was the first blown save by Chapman (4-0) in 12 chances this year.

Clint Frazier singled off Aaron Bummer (0-3) leading off the bottom half, and then stole second as Brett Gardner struck out. DJ LeMahieu was intentionally walked and Tyler Wade reached with an infield hit on a slow roller to second. Hendriks relieved to face Judge, who missed the first pitch, then took four balls for the first walk-off RBI of any kind in his big league career.

New York moved a season-high nine games over .500 at 28-19. The Yankees are 23-9 since their 5-10 start. AL Central-leading Chicago (26-19) has lost three straight for the first time this year.

**BREWERS 9, REDS 4**

**CINCINNATI (AP)** — Christian Yelich hit his first homer of the season and Kolten Wong had three hits, powering Milwaukee to the win. Yelich, who has been hampered by back trouble for much of the season, hit a solo drive in the ninth against Brad Brach.

The 2018 NL MVP finished with two hits and two RBIs. □

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